



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SERVICE SOLICITS INPUT ON SLICKSPOT PEPPERGRASS “BEST AVAILABLE BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION” DOCUMENT AND REQUESTS NEW OR UPDATED CONSERVATION EFFORTS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it is seeking public review and comment on a draft document that contains the best available biological information about slickspot peppergrass (*lepidium papilliferum*). The Service is also requesting submission of new or updated slickspot peppergrass conservation efforts during the public comment period, which ends March 30, 2006.

The Service is currently in the process of assessing slickspot peppergrass in response to the U.S. District Court of Idaho’s August 2005 remand order for the agency to reconsider its 2004 decision to withdraw a proposed rule to list the plant as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

The draft “Best Available Biological Information for Slickspot Peppergrass” (BAI) document includes existing and new scientific data and information about the species and its habitat. The Service is releasing the draft document for public review and comment to gain information that will assist the agency in making its final listing determination for slickspot peppergrass. The document will be peer reviewed by experts outside the Service.

New or updated conservation efforts for slickspot peppergrass, including updated conservation agreements, will be considered during the Service's analysis and decision process. Conservation efforts that were submitted to the Service prior to December 1, 2003 that have not been updated do not need to be resubmitted. The deadline for conservation effort submission is also March 30, 2006.

“Public and peer review of the draft BAI for slickspot peppergrass will help ensure that our agency has the most accurate and complete body of information about the plant and its habitat. All of this information will greatly enhance our ability to make a scientifically sound listing decision,” said the Service’s Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office Field Supervisor, Jeff Foss.

The document can be obtained online at <http://idahoes.fws.gov>, or by contacting the Service’s Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office at 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709, (208) 378-5243.

Data, information, comments, or questions concerning the BAI may be submitted in writing to the above address. Comments may also be faxed to (208) 378-5262, or e-mailed to fw1srbocomment@fws.gov. Please include "LEPA BAI Comments" in the subject line for faxes and e-mails. If our Internet connection is disrupted, please submit your comments by mail or fax.

Comments on the draft BAI document and new scientific information, including new or updated conservation efforts, will be accepted through close of business March 30, 2006.

For more information, please contact Susan Burch at (208) 378-5243 or by e-mail at susan_burch@fws.gov.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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